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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7051
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7787
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 6539
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3528
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1798
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6395
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SUBJECT: INDO-PAK TALKS: MEDIA REPORTS OF LEADERS' FIRST
MEETING SINCE MUMBAI ATTACKS

¶1. SUMMARY: Indian Prime Minister Singh and Pakistani President Zardari met on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Yekaterinburg June 16, their first meeting since the Mumbai terrorist attacks last November. Indian media widely applauded PM Singh's comments, crediting U.S. pressure for encouraging a mild thaw in relations. Singh and Zardari directed their respective Foreign Secretaries to meet in late June or early July, and the two leaders agreed to meet again in Sharm El Sheikh on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit July 16. Foreign Secretary Menon cautioned, however, that the meeting did not constitute a resumption of the Composite Dialogue. Separately, PM Singh also interacted with Iranian President Ahmedinejad on the margins of the SCO, but Delhi has yet to make any public statements on the disputed Iranian elections. END SUMMARY.

Indian Media Praise Singh,s Bold Approach, Credit U.S. Role

¶2. Prime Minister Singh opened his planned one-on-one meeting with Pakistani President Zardari on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Yekaterinburg June 16 by asserting in the presence of media that "Pakistan territory should not be used for terrorism against India." India's major dailies portrayed the meeting in a positive light, commending the Prime Minister's decision to engage Zardari while maintaining a tough stance toward Pakistan. Press reporting presented Singh,s approach as "no-nonsense" and "blunt" and portrayed Zardari as being embarrassed by Singh's sharp initial remarks which were made in the presence of the press. The Times of India characterized the meeting as an important step, saying, "the India-Pakistan chill is now officially over;" the Indian Express also led with the "First signs of Thaw in India-Pak 26/11 Freeze".

¶3. Several press reports credited U.S. pressure for helping to make the meeting between Delhi and Islamabad possible. In a front-page timeline titled "From Attacks to Talks," the Hindustan Times linked the meeting to the message Under Secretary Burns delivered while in Delhi last week that the U.S. would be pleased to see increased dialogue between the two countries. The Pioneer highlighted the U.S. reaction

that a resumption of the Indo-Pak dialogue was encouraging, and The Indian Express said the move sent out a signal to the U.S. that Delhi's step towards a dialogue with Islamabad shows that it is not "obstructionist."

More Talks Expected This Summer,
but No Composite Dialogue Yet

¶4. Singh and Zardari directed their respective Foreign Secretaries to meet in late June or early July and the two leaders agreed to meet again in Sharm El Sheikh on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement summit July 16, according to press reports. While the media seemed eager to characterize the meeting in Yekaterinburg as the resumption of a formal dialogue with Pakistan, Foreign Secretary Menon was more cautious. Avoiding suggestions that India gave in to pressure to start talks despite the lack of concrete action against the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks, Menon said, "We can't wish away the factors that have disrupted the dialogue," adding that there were no plans to resume the Composite Dialogue process anytime soon.

Silence on Disputed Iranian Election

¶5. PM Singh also interacted with Iranian President Ahmedinejad on the margins of the SCO summit. Although Indian media avidly reported on the Iranian Guardian

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Council's decision to recount votes from the disputed June 12 election, the Indian Government has not yet issued an official statement.

¶6. Post will obtain further information from GOI contacts after PM Singh and his delegation return from Russia.
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